

VICTORIA LODGE OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH
650 Fisgard Street. Victoria B.C. V8W 1R6

INFORMING THE GENERAL PUBLIC

by

W.Bro. W. Harry Lane, W.M. , HUDSON LODGE No.98 G.R.Q.

being a address given in

Wyman Memorial United Church, Hudson, Quebec. at Divine service on June 2, 1974.
1980-2

My Fellow Craftsmen -We ancient Free and Accepted Masons are here today in a body headed by our District Deputy Grand Master, RW. Bro. George Stiles who has brought with him a group of distinguished Masons to augment the Hudson members. We appreciate the generosity of Wyman Church members for permitting us to take over part of the space allotted to their use and we must acknowledge the courage of your pastor in permitting me to address you today. Replace him, I cannot, but this occasion may grant him a few moments pause for relaxation. Relax, we hope he will, even though he is unaware of what I may say - - A sermon, I will not call it, but rather say it is an attempt to explain our presence here today and to say something about our Order.

The fellowship of man is a long sought for goal, often mentioned in poetry and prose by those

4.

dreamers of the human race,-- its artists. The realization that it can only come about by a concerted effort of many minds has led to various attempts to achieve this goal through a system of training, of education and of organization.

Men differ from each other because of race, creed, color, nationality, education and training. Age- old fears motivate them, leading them to believe that each must dominate, each must conquer, each must convert and each must win over the other in every human endeavour. "All men are created equal" comes to us in the honeyed words of the politician. "Love thy Neighbour" has been the theme of prophets and poets, and is an essential tenet of all religions. Yet all about us man strives against man and grants concessions only upon defeat by superior strength. Liberty cries the politician and then proceeds to forge new chains; "Survival of the Finest" says the scientist. and proceeds to devise new powers of terror and compulsion. "Confrontation" cries the labor leader and proceeds to create misery for many human beings. Aid for the have-nots becomes chains to bind them to the givers. Greed for power by means of money, position and possessions rules the thoughts of men. The very words of the language have been so used and abused that their meaning has been completely altered.

Today's conditions are not new. The Volume of the Sacred Law mentions them over and over again throughout the long years of past ages. However difficult the time, men have worked to earn their bread and the stone mason has had the privilege of recording his efforts in the most enduring of materials- Stone. In the Middle ages those men produced the cathedrals that are dotted over Europe. The awe and wonder of the beholder led 18th century Englishmen to form modern speculative Masonry in the form we practice today. The mason's customs, procedures and tools now explain a philosophy of life and build a brotherhood of men of common ideals.

Noting that differences of politics and of religion are two subjects that have caused man to dispute with man, they were subjects that have been banned from all discussion in Lodge. They were momentous decisions to make, difficult to explain yet we today see them becoming more and more a part of our existence,

not only amongst we Masons but amongst all men of good will.

While religion is barred as a topic of Lodge discussion it does not prevent us from being religious ourselves. Our presence here today as a formal body of men is proof of that. As an organization we require our members to have a belief in a Superior Being and refer to Him as the Great Architect of the Universe, the Grand Geometrician, or the Most High, terms that can embrace the Deity in whatever form of religion a man accepts as his own. Being English in origin, Freemasonry has an open Christian Bible as a dominant feature of every meeting and its members are generally followers of one of the many sects of Christianity. The Old Testament of the Bible welcomes members of the Hebrew faith. However men of Hudson Lodge have sat with men of Islamic, Persian Zoastrian and Hindoo forms of religion and in these lodges the Sacred Volumes of their faith are used.

The brotherhood ideal is not something specially devised by Masons or only practiced by them. It is an essential part of all religions. Masonry proposes a means to extend it to all mankind whatever his form of worshipping the Deity. We bow the knee in formal prayer, others assume different positions, but whatever the pose, a Mason assumes in prayer, he acknowledges the existence of the Great Architect of the Universe and asks for His assistance, ever acknowledging thanks for past blessings. Prayer, an appeal to God, usually has reference to earthly mailers and this in turn leads to the contemplation of God and man and their relationship.

Politically man has raised his hand against his fellow man from time immemorial. He has forged many implements for the destruction of his brethren on this planet. The hand of Masonic friendship has often softened such cruelties. The hand, extended in Masonic friendship has bridged the gap of political animosities. Probably that is why we are thought to have a very special handshake of recognition. But a handshake alone would be a poor method to accomplish a purpose. It really is an introduction - a pledge of good intentions between two meeting for the first time. When exchanged between two who know each

5.
other it becomes a greeting, and between members of a common brotherhood it is a recognition of the pledge of brotherhood. It is as such that we consider it. We do not want it used as a subterfuge, a gambit to make the other party unaware of our real intentions or to mislead him. To us it must be a sure pledge of brotherhood, a symbol of assistance, aid and support which we should be ever ready to extend to a brother.

We stress traveling as a means to further brotherhood. To us this means visiting other lodges, singly or in groups. In doing so we believe we are assisting our brethren and helping ourselves to acquire a greater knowledge of our fellowman. We hear of his exploits, his difficulties, his troubles and his accomplishments and unite with him in mutual support of the concept of brotherhood. Our feet should never be too weary to unite with others of like belief to aid a brother in trouble. This concept of traveling and lodge visiting has a particular appeal to men who must spend a considerable part of their time away from home on business. Hence we have many members in the construction industry in its many forms, and the transportation industry. Making themselves known at the local lodge they are assured of a welcome by men with a common bond of brotherhood. They are truly at home away from home. Here they meet brethren more fixed in their means of livelihood and capable of presenting them with a knowledge of local conditions. It really is the medieval guild craftsman's concept of assistance to the mason, a construction worker who must move to a new site once the building he was working on is complete or who is desirous of more knowledge

than he could obtain if he remained fixed in his former position. The words Free and Accepted have a special meaning here, some what different from their original meaning in masonry, yet very appropriate to their use.

We accept a man as our brother Mason, fully aware that he is an individual with his own concept of life. He has his secret dreams, his personal wishes, his own means of survival, his own personal commitments to those near and dear to him and to those engaged with him in earning his livelihood. Those are his special secrets which we are prepared to protect and respect, often at serious disadvantage to our Order. Many class us as a secret society but they fail to note that we have our building, our lodge hall and notices in newspapers, all openly displayed. Our concept of Brotherhood is widely known. Where is the Secret Society? Secrets we may have, but no more so than those of all other organizations. The trade secrets of manufacturers are not communicated freely - nor are ours. Christianity has its entrance requirement, baptism, we have ours; it has its dedication ceremony, confirmation, so have we ours. Our members have used a knowledge of Masonic procedures to fashion the procedural manner for many other organizations. Some of our terms have become household words "play square.", "'be on the square", "true die", "on the level" are just a few of them. We urge our members not to revile a fellow member but on the contrary to come to the defense of his good name as far as it is in their power to do so. It is easy to be contemptuous of another, but Brotherhood demands a closer look at differences, at acts of another that may be contrary to our concept of them. A close study of the man and his actions will add to our knowledge of human behaviour - revilement serves only a deeply devious mind or is employed by a shallow individual to hide his own imperfections.

Masonry is definitely a male organization but it pays just respect to the Ladies. It acknowledges women's share in the world as no other organization does. The Volume of Sacred Law, old testament, is made of many books but only two honor the Ladies - Ruth and Esther -and it is on the Book of Ruth that men enter Masonry. Ruth the Moabite "did her thing" in the words of today's slang and abandoning her own people, went with Naomi, her mother-in-law, back to Bethlehem where she married Boaz. She was thus the great, great, grandmother of Solomon, one of the singularly few great leaders of history, renowned for wisdom and understanding.

The handshake greeting, the prayerful pose, the travel concept, the individual concept of life and preserving a man's good reputé are the basic principles of our Brotherhood. We claim no special rights of ownership for them - we did not originate them - we merely try to exemplify them symbolically, so that they are more clearly impressed on the mind of our members. Every religious leader, every true statesman has mentioned them in varying forms. They are the essence of good relations between individuals, between peoples, between races, between creeds. They are the tools that will, one day we hope, forge a

6.

world of brotherhood.

We are not a wealthy organization, we hold little appeal to the man of great wealth, we control no great finances. We represent the humble stone cutters and sellers of the Middle Ages, the men who worked hard and long to produce the stone concepts of their age as exemplified by their great cathedrals. Those soaring masses of stone have bequeathed to us sermons of what can be accomplished when each individual employs his own particular skill to fashion his part of the common goal. The challenge to us is to do likewise to make this world more in keeping with the concept of the Great Architect of the Universe.

Masonry is not a religion, is not in conflict with any religion. Our Apprentices have recounted to them the essential requirements of a good citizen and our craftsmen are told to gaze about them, note: the wondrous works of the Great Architect of the Universe. They are instructed to use their God given abilities to study these works so as to enable them to render true homage to their Creator. In the opening chapters of Genesis, we are told how the Creator laboured for six days and as a true craftsman he took pleasure in what he produced. "And God saw everything that he had made and, behold it was very good." Genesis 1 31. The last part of that quotation should be the experience of every true craftsman, his true reward for all his labor - personal satisfaction in his own labor.

Masonry is also described as a system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols. In other words we present the abstract idea to our members by means of images drawn from the practices and tools of the old stone craftsman. And we do so with all the grace and beauty of literary style suitable to the subject. This symbolic means of expression is an old, old method of teaching and illustration. It is in common usage today - the Maple Leaf represents Canada - the Pyramids represent Egypt - the tailed zero represents Hydro Quebec - the sensuous snake-the Canadian National Railway. Even our alphabet is only a collection of symbols representing sounds.

Using these means, the Order devotes itself to an attempt to make life more companionable by trying to remove some of the purely man-made difficulties that surround us. Each member is asked to build, not a temple in stone, but a temple of humanity. A structure where man may dwell with man without fear, animosity or want

Some think our efforts childish in their simplicity and outdated in today's materialistic world. They forget that the fundamental concepts of civilization are childlike in their simplicity. Only their frequent repetition and reiteration can maintain them alive. Failure to do so has reduced their potency in the body of common knowledge and given us many of the evils we so deplore today.

Since its inception in 1922 - Hudson's Masonic Lodge has each year made a formal presence at one of the churches in this area. This year it is again the turn to be at Wyman United Church. We thank you for your very cordial reception and we are deeply gratified for the privilege of being permitted to take part in this Divine Service. In the past we have had members of our Lodge deliver sermons on these occasions, but they were the days when we had Rev. Canon A.P. Shatford or Rev. Canon J.J. Willis or Rev. Jos. Mowatt, all renowned clergymen as active members of our Lodge. Lacking a clergyman in our midst now the task has been handed to me this year as Master of the Lodge. I hope my few remarks have explained something of our Order to you.
